



TRANSFORMING California State Parks

By Implementing Positive Change

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California Department of Parks and Recreation

Transformation Action Plan

Introduction

California's State Park System is a magnificent collection of 279 park units and many protected landscapes covering almost 1.6 million acres of majestic peaks, healthy forests, scenic coastlines, and quiet deserts. It's natural, cultural, historic, aesthetic and recreational values are beyond compare. While its beauty and potential is great, most of the System's operations and facilities are outdated, broken and stuck in time. Its programs and operations are seriously constrained by archaic bureaucratic structures and processes. It looks and feels all of its 150 years of age.

However, the California State Parks System, including its employees, managers, leaders, volunteers, partners, supporters and stakeholders

now recognize the need for positive change and it is imminent. In fact, positive change has already commenced.

During the past few years the Parks Department has been in constant crisis mode trying to address a multitude of significant challenges as documented by a host of studies, reports, and audits. Although Park services continue to be exemplary, the service levels are declining due primarily to rising costs, declining revenues and mission creep. The Department's deficiencies include inadequate fiscal management systems, insufficient annual and deferred maintenance, outdated technology, depleted training systems, insufficient marketing, very little diversity, limited appeal to youth and underserved communities, inadequate park development policies, and an antiquated management structure.

The Parks Forward Commission (PFC) was appointed in July of 2013, in accordance with the California State Parks Stewardship Act of 2012 and AB 1478, to recommend improvements for ensuring the State Park System's long-term sustainability. The Commission's primary purpose was "to look beyond the immediate crisis and toward a broader vision for California Parks – a vision of a focused and modernized Department positioned to lead a park system that:

- ◆ Values and protects the state's iconic landscapes, natural resources, and cultural heritage;
- ◆ Remains relevant and accessible to all Californians and welcomes visitors from around the world;
- ◆ Engages and inspires younger generations; and
- ◆ Promotes healthy and active lifestyles and communities that are quintessentially Californian."

The Parks Forward report is due to be released in late January.

In anticipation of the PFC Report, the California Natural Resources Agency and the new Acting Parks Director commenced a State Parks Transformation process by retaining an advisor with extensive state and local government organizational development experience to identify a series of initiatives that will result in many positive changes in the State Parks organization. To accomplish these changes, he has assembled a talented Transformation Team that has prepared this Plan to transform the State Parks Department over the next two years and beyond. Team members are listed in Attachment A to this Draft Plan. The Plan calls for implementing positive change by completing a number of initiatives that closely follow the PFC's four basic themes:

The Department needs to:

- ◆ Make fundamental change to succeed in the future.
- ◆ Work productively with new and existing partners to improve and expand facilities, programs and garner more resources.
- ◆ Expand park access for all Californians.
- ◆ Garner stable and diversified funding, which is imperative for a vibrant park system

2017 Desired Future State

The Transformation Team's 2017 Desired Future State, or Vision, for the California State Parks and Recreation Department is as follows:

Over the next two years the Transformation Team will endeavor to strengthen the California State Park System through a series of initiatives supporting specific goals meant to set the Department on a path to a more viable future. Achieving these goals will result in

changed policies, procedures, guidelines and organizational structure that support an entrepreneurial, service-oriented, creative and collaborative culture. The initiatives will provide the tools and streamline the processes that have hindered staff and partners in the past, enabling them to become much more effective. Rebuilding trust and credibility both inside and outside the organization is a necessary result of the transformation effort.

All of the initiatives will be designed and executed with this overall vision in mind. One of the most important initiatives is the development of a Service-Based Budgeting system that enables Park managers to identify and prioritize service levels within its five major programs based on available revenue in any year. Also, Parks must embrace many different cost-effective business models operated by well-trained and motivated employees, volunteers and partners of all types in the future. Expanding innovative and creative partnerships will be key to the success of the Department.

The culture of the Department will be characterized by an abiding commitment to expanding and enhancing the visitor experience by means of an enthusiastic, results-oriented spirit fueled by creativity and innovation. There is a strong commitment to excellence, high performance and accountability.

Also, Parks facilities will be better maintained on an annual basis and the deferred maintenance project list will be shrinking due to a newly established financing plan. Modern technology tools will be in place to support robust revenue raising programs and all Park services.

The Department's programs and services will be available to and utilized by a broader group of people, including diverse ethnic

communities, youth, elderly and disadvantaged populations. The Department will expand and add new services at parks that respond to the interests of these populations, making the department relevant to all Californians. Protection and enhancement of natural and cultural resources continues to be a high priority for the Department.

The Department's many education programs will be enhanced to provide a larger contribution to school curriculum, and school district partnerships will be increased and expanded.

The Department's financial structure will be stabilized over time by realigning revenue and expenditure categories to create proper operational incentives. For example, fee-based revenue should generally pay for visitor related services. In addition, the Service-Based Budgeting system will provide credible financial data enabling the department to operate specific service levels within available revenue each year. All management systems and department policies will benefit from a data driven approach to positive changes.

Many more positive changes need to occur in future years through an internal continuous improvement process. However, after two years of Transforming Parks, the Department will be well positioned to excel in all its core programs and to build on its proud history of preservation and recreation.

Transformation Team Strategic Goals

1. Develop Excellent Management Systems.
2. Maintain High Quality Operations and Public Service.
3. Create Meaningful Connections and Relevancy to People.
4. Protect and Enhance Natural and Cultural Resources.

To facilitate internal communications, a web-based system has been developed to enable Parks employees to communicate with the Transformation Team Leader anonymously. All suggestions will be reviewed and responded to on the Transformation Website. Open communication will also be met by having each team member meet with several small groups of employees and partners throughout the state to discuss the transformation process and suggestions for positive change.

Another way to continue positive transformation beyond the initial two year process will be to establish an Innovation Unit within the Department.

Over the next two years, the Transformation Team will adhere to the following core values as it works on the initiatives in an effort to make positive structural and sustainable changes to the Parks Department that will move it into the 2017 Desired Future State: Diversity; Respect; Transparency; and Accountability.

Transformation Initiatives

Over the next two years, the Transformation Team and its Committees will begin the transformation of the California State Parks and Recreation Department by implementing many of the following high priority initiatives that will result in positive changes leading to a vastly improved system of parks and protected lands. It is apparent that not all of the initiatives can be accomplished during the two year transformation process. The highest priority initiatives will be undertaken first and the remaining initiatives will be worked on in year three and beyond. There are 30 initiatives contained in the four strategic goals: 1) Develop Excellent Management Systems; 2) Maintain

High Quality Operations; 3) Develop and Solidify Meaningful Connections and Relevancy to People; and 4) Protect and Enhance Natural and Cultural Resources.

Strategic Goal 1: Develop Excellent Management Systems

1. To improve overall Human Resources policies, procedures and guidelines.

- ◆ **Streamline the Staff Hiring Process**

This initiative will involve analyzing the current Parks and Cal HR hiring procedures, identify unnecessary barriers and implement positive changes to them. Also, the committee will work with Cal HR to further streamline their process so that it balances overall position control with the need to maintain optimal, current service levels in all Parks operating units. For example, the current practice of conducting statewide recruitments for most Parks positions should be reviewed and the use of more localized recruitments should be explored. Hiring should be more real-time and continuous filing online exams should be used whenever possible.

- ◆ **Simplify the Procurement of Goods and Services Process**

This initiative will involve analyzing the current Parks and State procurement processes, identify unnecessary barriers and implement positive changes to them. Emphasis will be placed on maximizing flexibility balanced with the need to ensure fairness and protect public assets.

- ◆ **Improve Performance Management**

This initiative will create a system to ensure Parks Department staff, particularly in management positions: 1) Have clarity on

performance expectations; 2) Are held accountable for performance through a rigorous evaluation process; 3) Are provided with rewards/recognition for superior performance; 4) Are made aware of opportunities for development and career advancement; and 5) Are provided with ongoing Leadership Development training.

◆ **Redevelop the Department Training Program**

This initiative will return the Parks training program to a comprehensive, substantive set of training components properly aligned with departmental career paths emphasizing appropriate skillsets and knowledge bases needed to serve the department's 2,500 full and part-time positions.

◆ **Establish a Leadership Development Program**

This initiative will establish a much needed program to identify, train, challenge, nurture and prepare future Parks managers and leaders so that they are ready and willing to provide the leadership needed to sustain a world class Parks Department in the next 150 years.

◆ **Align Position Classifications, Qualifications and Organizational Structure with the 2017 Desired Future State**

This initiative will review and adjust all Parks management position classifications to enable open pathways to leadership from all relevant backgrounds and experiences both from within and outside the department. This initiative will also review the current Parks organizational structure, analyze various improvement options and make appropriate changes consistent with the 2017 Desired Future State. Also, current

salary compaction issues will be reviewed and correction recommendations formulated.

2. To develop a new Parks results-oriented Budget and Finance System.

◆ **Service-Based Budgeting Program**

This initiative will develop and implement the SBB Program that will enable the Department to tell its story in a compelling manner by describing its organization in terms of programs and services along with associated budgeted costs. This initiative has five definitive components as follows:

- A. Programs. The California State Parks department has five direct core programs identified in its Mission statement:

1. Natural and Cultural Resource Protection
2. Facilities Management
3. Education and Interpretation
4. Public Safety
5. Recreation

SBB will describe each program in detail.

- B. Services. Each of the five programs is made up of a series of operational services. SBB will describe in detail each service performed in a fiscal year. This effort will yield the current service level of all Parks services.

- C. Service Costs. Once current services are fully described, the estimated costs of each service will be determined using consistent budget assumptions and current Park allocations. The budget cost amounts allocated to each service will include operational, support and administrative costs. The

result of this effort will be the current Parks Department budget presented as the sum of all defined services.

D. Service Standards. Desired levels of service will be defined in all service categories.

E. Service Priorities. Once fully developed, SBB will enable Parks Leadership to prioritize its services and service levels.

F. Future Budgets. Once fully developed, SBB will enable Parks Leadership to propose future budgets by describing the costs and benefits of current service levels, enhanced service levels, new services and service level reductions when revenue declines.

◆ **New Budget Management System**

This initiative will consist of an improved revenue and expenditure tracking system designed to give managers complete and current financial data that will enable them to effectively allocate projected revenue and stay within budgeted expenditure limits during each fiscal year. The fiscal data provided by the improved system will allow Park managers to maintain service levels in a flexible and cost-effective environment. This budget system will also allow managers to be held accountable for annual fiscal, program and service outcomes.

◆ **New and Enhanced Revenue Generation Program**

This initiative will identify a suite of potential revenue raising and revenue generation programs, services and activities.

◆ **Deferred Maintenance Financing Program**

This initiative will survey past Park bond structures and identify alternatives for developing a new long term deferred

maintenance financing and prepare a report for discussion with the Department of Finance, Natural Resources Agency and the Governor's Office.

3. To Improve Park Planning and Innovation Development

◆ **Streamline, Update and Align Parks Department Policies, Procedures and Guidelines with the 2017 Desired Future State**

This initiative will review, analyze and implement changes to departmental policies, procedures, guidelines and practices to create proper incentives, consistency and control in the management of State Parks.

◆ **Study the Existing Parks Department Organizational Structure, Analyze Options and Implement Beneficial Changes**

This initiative will consider all organizational structures and select alternatives that will enable leadership to reduce the number of management levels, streamline operations, lower administrative and operating costs, provide increased accountability, responsibility and authority at the lowest management level possible and in the process, improve service value.

◆ **Develop an Existing Park Data Base**

This initiative would enable the Department to evaluate park usage, costs, revenue potential, and other data needed to properly plan for future park operation. In addition, the data base would enable the Department to explore how existing park units could be expanded, or changed over time.

◆ **Develop Policies and Data that would Improve the Development Process of New Parks**

This initiative will develop a comprehensive data base of all undeveloped State Park properties. In addition, this initiative will establish a development process for new parks that connects to the current State Parks General Plan process that culminates in final action by the State Parks and Recreation Commission. Currently the Parks GP process ends with the formal addition of new park property to a Park Unit General Plan. Time then goes by until actions and finances are needed to begin the actual development process. Under the new process, it is envisioned that a new development agreement or scoping document would be prepared and approved by the Parks Director and the Natural Resources Agency Director within one year after the new park property is added to a General Plan. The document would outline the scope of the proposed development project, estimate one-time development costs and ongoing operational costs of the project and identify potential funding sources. It would also list the development action steps necessary and time lines. This document would then serve as the initial roadmap of development for each proposed project.

◆ **Review the Roles and Responsibilities of the Statewide Parks Department Support Organizations and Commissions**

This initiative will review the current roles, responsibilities and structure of the many regional support organizations to assure consistency. This initiative will also review current roles, responsibility and structure of the following California Commissions: State Historic Resources; Park and Recreation; Boating and Waterways; and the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle

Recreation. Then new alternative structures that are deemed to be more streamlined, accountable and cost-effective will be analyzed and recommended consistent with the 2017 Desired State.

4. Modernization and Information Technology Improvements

◆ **Identify, Analyze and Implement Technology and General Administrative Improvements**

This initiative will enable the Department to raise more revenue, manage finances, improve operations and security systems. It will identify and analyze outdated technologies that can be upgraded to the best systems available and quickly move the Parks Department to the 2017 Desired Future State. It is anticipated that the Department will retain outside expert consultants evaluate current systems, recommend strategic improvements and work with Parks staff to implement them over the next two years.

This initiative will also identify and recommend specific changes to archaic administrative policies, procedures, guidelines and practices. Other modernization projects could include adding campsites with hookups, energy use improvements and alternative energy opportunities.

5. Marketing the Transformed State Parks System

◆ **Develop a New Marketing Program for Parks**

In the modern world of Parks and Recreation Systems, it is not enough to offer wonderful service programs in scenic mountain, forest, coastal and desert properties in the hope that people will visit. Due to regular economic downturns that result in reduced fee revenue and tax receipts, coupled with

ever rising operational cost, parks systems must generate more and more revenue in the good economic times just to maintain service levels. So, for two very important reasons Parks Leaders must aggressively market park facilities, programs and services: 1) To raise revenue in sustainable ways; and 2) To make State Parks more relevant to the changing demographics of California, the United States, and the World.

This initiative will develop and implement an updated marketing program by engaging outside skilled consultants and managers, working with a Transformation Team Modernization Committee.

◆ **Document and Communicate the Current State Parks Story**

This initiative will describe the current Parks System, review the current Parks Mission, roles and responsibilities, and identify the economic and benefits of a state park system. Also, this initiative will highlight all current innovative programs operating in the department. This data will enable the Parks Department to tell its story, assist in other initiative work, which will assist them in marketing the new, transformed California State Parks Department.

Strategic Goal 2: Maintain High Quality Operations and Public Service

1. Maintenance of Existing Buildings, Facilities, Natural and Cultural Resources

◆ **Develop a High Performance Deferred Maintenance Program**

This initiative will continue the current effort to develop a credible review and analysis process to determine the list of priority deferred maintenance projects at any point in time. The final process will include an independent third-party

costing system and construction planning procedures that are the best available. An ongoing financing program is listed as a separate Initiative in this plan.

◆ **Develop an Annual Maintenance Program**

This initiative will advance the premise that an effective deferred maintenance program can only succeed if it is coupled with a steady ongoing maintenance program that is funded at least at a minimum level annually. The Department's funding priorities will be set and sustained to ensure an adequate level of ongoing maintenance for buildings and facilities each and every year.

2. Partnerships with Outside Organizations

◆ **Review and Update all Policies and Procedures that Enable Partnerships for Parks Operations**

This initiative will review and analyze all policies, procedures, guidelines and practices related to Parks Partnerships with governmental agencies, joint powers authorities, private non-profit organizations, associations and private businesses. The goal will be to make it much easier to partner with the California State Parks Department and at the same time retain adequate control over state government assets. Working effectively with partners to provide and enhance services does not happen automatically. It takes time, effort and sustained collaboration. This process is difficult and costly, but very important to high quality service delivery. The Department needs to allocate sufficient funds to effectively partner in the future.

◆ **Develop a Management Structure that Fosters Positive relationships with New and Existing Partners**

This initiative will establish in the Department a Partnerships Program and policies with the purpose of providing assistance to current partners as well as developing new and improved partnerships with public agencies, California Native American tribes, non-profit businesses, volunteers, civic leaders and other potential partners. The department will prioritize and provide resources necessary to facilitate, experiment with, develop and manage cost effective partnerships. In addition, the unit will develop means of enabling the Department to accept services, temporary staffing, resources, and projects developed by partners.

◆ **Develop a New Non-Profit Public Benefit Organization to Provide Operational, Financial, and Strategic Support for Organizations that Manage Parks in California**

This initiative will inventory the essential needs of organizations that manage protected lands and parklands in California. This inventory will be used to develop the charter for a new non-profit organization to help support a wide variety of organizations that manage parks in California, with its first priority being State Parks. The Parks Forward Commission labeled this organization “Parks California”. A major function for this new organization will be the ability to receive and distribute funding from government and non-government sources. The PFC envisioned such an organization to be broad based and entrepreneurial. It would seek to manage projects and programs not currently advanced by

other support organizations, including the existing Parks Foundation, and it would not undertake advocacy as a part of its mission. This initiative will probably take the entire two year period to properly develop. The Transformation team will reach out to park stakeholders for advice and input to this important initiative.

3. Volunteers and Docents

◆ **Improve the Quality and Quantity of Volunteers and Docents Delivering a Wide Range of Parks Department Services to Millions of Visitors**

This initiative will review and analyze all current policies, procedures and guidelines related to the 39,600 volunteers and docents that support all State Parks operations. Revisions will be implemented that benefit the recruitment, training, motivation and retention of existing and future volunteers and docents.

Strategic Goal 3: Develop and Solidify Meaningful Connection and Relevancy to People

1. Outreach to Underserved Communities

◆ **Enhance and Develop Outreach Services to Underserved Communities**

This initiative will survey current and develop new programs and services intended to engage underserved communities in State Parks. It will develop new strategies to increase the size of existing relevant programs and take them to a larger statewide scale. This initiative will identify new projects and programs that will increase active participation of underserved community members in State Parks. An important component

of this initiative will be transportation issues, especially how public transit systems could assist in increasing park usage. Potential examples are increasing family camp programs, youth oriented programs, culturally relevant interpretive programs, programs responsive to changing demographics and re-establishing a recruitment office sensitive to demographics.

◆ **Consider Expanding the State Parks System in Underserved Areas**

This initiative will study the feasibility of adding new and renovating existing parks in urban areas and the Central Valley. It will also study the feasibility of adding new parks that celebrate themes of statewide significance.

2. Enriched Experience for Visitors and Non-Visitors

◆ **Develop Alternative Minimal Amenity Overnight Lodging**

This initiative will establish the first modern, affordable, eco-friendly cabin pilot project in an existing State Park within the year and use information from the pilot project to determine how best to develop these cabins throughout the State Parks System in future years.

◆ **Study Existing Regional Parks Programs that Emphasize Healthy Lifestyles**

This initiative will survey existing regional park programs such as Healthy Parks, Healthy People, analyze their benefits, and implement strategies to involve the State Parks Systems in these and similar programs.

Strategic Goal 4: Protection and Enhancement of Natural and Cultural Resources

1. Increase Partnerships with Stakeholders
 - ◆ **Increase Partnerships with Universities, Native American Tribes, Land Trusts and Other Stakeholders to Identify Research Needs, Develop Best Practices to Protect and Preserve Natural and Cultural Resources**
2. Emphasize and Address Climate Change
 - ◆ **Survey Best Practices in Parks Systems, Enhance Existing Efforts and Develop New Program Areas to Address Climate Change Adaptation in Natural and Cultural Resources and State Parks Management**
3. Develop New Strategies to Encourage Adaptive Reuse of Cultural Resources Such as Historic Structure

Transformation Team

The Transformation Team is poised to continue refining this draft Action Plan and prioritize the initiatives to ensure that those most critical to achieving the four strategic goals are completed and implemented as soon as possible, and that the other important initiatives are completed both within the two years and beyond. To facilitate this process, the Team will develop a management performance dashboard consisting of initiative description, definitive components, timelines, responsible team and committee members, deliverables and outcomes. The dashboard will be placed on the Transformation Website and updated monthly.

The Team Leader and Acting Director intend to work with the State Legislature and its Leaders to form an active working group of

Legislators and staff to monitor Transformation progress and discuss potential legislation needed during the Transformation Process. In addition, the Team Leader and Acting Director intend to assemble a high level Advisory Group to provide input during the two year Transformation Process.

Summary

This Draft Transformation Action Plan is and will continue to be a dynamic and flexible framework document throughout the two-year Transformation Process and beyond. The initiatives will be modified as the Team moves from positive change concepts to deliverables, implementation and outcomes. The Team will make course corrections and adjustments as they learn more about issues, obstacles and opportunities. The Transformation Plan will be a direction, a compass setting, not a GPS location.

Also, it is anticipated that the Initiatives will be completed and implemented on a flow basis. The Team will not work through the two year time period and then publish a final report. The Team will move quickly from words to action and each completed initiative implementation will be fully documented and numbered TT-1, TT-2 and so on.

Substantive work has been completed by the Parks Forward Commission and others on the need for positive change to ensure a vibrant, efficient and relevant California State Park System in the future. Positive changes have already commenced and it is now time for the formal Transformation Process to begin.

By Implementing Positive Change**TRANSFORMATION TEAM****Team Leader**

Steve Szalay Special Advisor on the California State Parks Department

Team Members

Ron Birkhead	Chief, Northern Service Center
Helen Carriker	Deputy Director, Administrative Services
Jay Chamberlin	Chief, Natural Resources Division
Ellen Clark	Statewide Volunteer Coordinator, Interpretation and Education Division
Michaele DeBoer	State Park Superintendent II, Community Involvement Section
Dana Jones	District Superintendent, Capital District
Karl Knapp	Chief, Facilities Management Division
Todd Lewis	Sector Superintendent, Orange Coast Central Sector, Orange Coast District
Steve McCormick	Special Advisor, Resources Legacy Fund
Clay Phillips	District Superintendent (Ret.), San Diego Coast District
Danita Rodriguez	District Superintendent, Bay Area District
Andy Vasquez	Administrative Officer III, Orange Coast District
Sean Woods	Sector Superintendent, Los Angeles Sector, Angeles District
Jared Zucker	Program Analyst, Boating and Waterways Division
Consultants (2+)	